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Memoir
of
John Laug
Bickersteth

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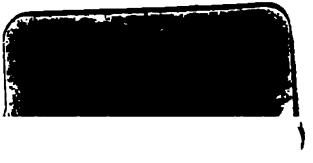

RUGBY SCHOOL.

MEMOIR

OF

JOHN LANG BICKERSTETH,

LATE OF RUGBY SCHOOL.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word."—Psa. cxix. 9.

WITH

A PREFACE BY THE REV. J. BICKERSTETH, M.A.

RECTOR OF SAPCOTE.

LONDON:
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PREFACE.

THE materials for the following Memoir have been chiefly furnished by its lamented subject.

They were confided to the care of one who had observed, and knew how to appreciate, a character of so much excellence and promise, and who has arranged them in the form in which they are now presented to the reader.

It is scarcely possible to over-estimate the worth of youthful piety: what more pleasing to God—what so graceful in itself, or so edifying in the way of ex-

ample and encouragement to the, as yet, undecided or unthinking young? What so bright, and cheering in its aspect, upon the future of two worlds? And is it unreasonable to hope, that, under the blessing of God, a sketch of the path pursued by this youthful convert may allure others to enter upon and pursue the same path, and with the like diligence and success?

The grace of God is consistent and uniform in its operation and results.

It moves always in the direction of repentance, and faith, and holiness.

It inspires a determination to do the will of God at all costs, and declines no sacrifice.

Its talk is of God's truth, and of his salvation.

It re-echoes the angels' song, "Glory

to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men." And its fruit is one and the same with the fruit of the Spirit.

It breathes, it lives, in an atmosphere of "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," Gal. v. 22, 23.

Doubtless this piety, in whomsoever it dwells as a principle and rule of action, includes, and is inseparable from, trials. How can he escape them who resolves to live godly in Christ Jesus? 2 Tim. iii. 12.

The world loves only its own: and he whom the grace of God has separated from the world, will have to encounter its hatred, and perhaps its scorn.

Nevertheless, piety, even in this life,

is not unrecompensed: it is quite impossible that it should be unnoticed or unremembered in heaven. To the regenerate in Christ Jesus, the commandments of God are not grievous; and "in keeping of them," not only there *will be*, but "there *is*, great reward," Psa. xix. 11.

And whatever opposition it may cost the pious young to maintain their integrity, the consciousness of that integrity will sustain them under even sharp trials. What balm so healing as that which flows from an uncondemning heart? What peace like his whom grace has taught and warranted to say—"Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?" Rom. v. 1.

Upon principles like these, the dear

child whose name stands in front of this little Memoir, started and proceeded, early seeking and early finding the path of life, which conducted him early to Him, who was the object of his supreme affection and desire, in whose presence is fulness of joy, at whose right hand there are pleasures,—not temporal, not transitory, like the very best that earth affords, but pleasures for evermore. Psa. xvi. 11.

To these principles of grace, by grace, he adhered, and, in one so young, with an almost surprising tenacity. These principles he found by experience strong enough to support him in all dangers and to carry him through difficulties which, to others, actuated by principles less sanctifying and sound, would have been insurmountable.

The warfare to which the Christian is pledged, to him was appointed to be short; it is now accomplished; he has fought the good fight; he is entered into peace. No more we number him with those who are living, standing, and walking by faith; but with those who, having lived to the Lord, and died to the Lord, and in the Lord, dwell in his presence in the brightness of everlasting light.

Yet let not the lesson of his living example be lost sight of. From his habitation in glory, being dead, he speaks, and especially to those of his own standing in years:—

"Would you be happy as I am? remember your Creator now. Follow Christ; pray for the promised Holy Spirit. Ever stand in awe of sin, and in the good and right way be bold as a lion; make much

of the Bible, and be much in prayer, and much in praise. Faint not, nor be weary in well-doing. Honour God, and God will honour you. Endure to the end, and you shall be saved."

Should this Memoir fall into the hands of some who personally knew the subject of it — who loved and valued him when alive; and when he died, sorrowed not with hopeless sorrow — who discerned in him things that were excellent, and the grace of God that made them so, and showed him kindness for his heavenly Master's sake,—let these call to mind the sweet words in which that Master will acknowledge it: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," Matt. xxv. 40.

And may others also, on whom, alas! this example of youthful piety, which they witnessed, exercised no healthful influence for good, by the consideration of it now, and of its end, be warned of the consequences to those who, not having his faith, cannot be the heirs of his hope; be warned by the solemn fact of his quick removal out of our sight, and also be moved by the grace that made him what he was, to seek for the glory, honour, and immortality which we certainly believe he enjoys, and for the crown like his, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give unto all them that love his appearing! 2 Tim. iv. 8.

J. B.

Sapcote, Leicestershire.

MEMOIR

OF

JOHN LANG BICKERSTETH.

CHAPTER I.

THE subject of the following Memoir, John Lang Bickersteth, the eldest son of Henry Bickersteth, esq., was born at the Cape of Good Hope, on the 23rd of April, 1832. In the year 1837 his parents returned for a time to England; and John, then about five years of age, spent several months at Sapcote Rectory, Leicestershire, with his grandfather, the Rev. J. Bickersteth.

During this period his chief instructress was his youthful aunt Annie, whose strength was even then failing under the

malady which, in the course of that year, terminated her short life. She ardently devoted herself, nevertheless, to the employment of training her little nephew, and delighted in teaching him to repeat texts, hymns, collects, and the Catechism. The pupil and the instructress were, however, soon parted, never to meet again on earth: the former, to accompany his parents across the ocean, on their return to the Cape; the latter—after six weeks of suffering, sustained with truly Christian patience—to take a yet longer journey, from the world which is visible and temporal, to that which is unseen and eternal.

So deep had been her interest in her occupation as instructress to the child, that during the delirium which preceded her death, she was heard talking in the kindest manner to the little fellow, then far away, and attempting to teach him,

in the persuasion that he was still by her side. She fell asleep in Jesus, October 6, 1837, aged sixteen.

An uncle of John's accompanied the party on their return to the Cape: he went out to study medicine, under the care of his eldest brother, John's father.

The only incident of the voyage which seemed to have made a strong impression on John's memory, was the following:—One stormy night, a sudden lurch of the ship threw the little boy violently out of his berth, and he was in great danger of being seriously hurt; when his father, who occupied the berth below him, sprang up in the dark, and with astonishing quickness and presence of mind, succeeded in rescuing his son whilst in the act of falling, and received him unhurt into his arms.

On their arrival at the Cape, John's uncle, Edmund, then a youth of about

eighteen, devoted some of the leisure hours which his professional studies allowed him, to the instruction of his nephew, who, from his earliest years, seems to have won, in no common degree, the love of all his teachers. Nor was this wonderful, for his disposition was naturally sweet, and gentle, and affectionate: habits of ready obedience had been early acquired, and his powers, which were of no ordinary kind, were, by Divine grace, early sanctified to the heavenly Master's use.

It would now be difficult exactly to ascertain at what period of his childhood that blessed change commenced, of which all are partakers who enter into the kingdom of heaven; more especially as, notwithstanding the taint of that fallen nature, which, alas! is the heritage of all, his outward conduct was, from the first dawn of reason, singularly blameless.

As time passed on, however, it became increasingly evident that the development of so much that was "lovely and of good report," was the result of no merely *natural* causes, but of the operations of the indwelling Spirit.

About a year and a half after his arrival at the Cape, it pleased God to deprive him of his teacher, in a way peculiarly painful and unlooked for. On the 1st of June, 1839, Edmund walked out with a young friend, on a shooting excursion. On reaching a point whence he had a full view of the ocean, he watched with great interest the departure of a vessel by which he had just been despatching letters to his relatives at home. He walked on a short distance, till, on some marshy ground, his foot slipped, the loaded gun which he was carrying went off, its contents entered his side, and he almost instantly expired on the spot. It

was a bitter trial to John's father, to be obliged to send to England such heavy tidings respecting the young brother to whom he was warmly attached, and who had been committed to his care; yet he who sent, and they who received the intelligence, sorrowed not as those sorrow who have no hope that their loved ones rest in Jesus.

This event rendered it needful to send John to school, and he was placed with a clergyman, the Rev. Edward Judge, at Simon's Town, Cape of Good Hope, with whom he remained more than six years, pursuing his studies with great success, and winning for himself a high character, "not more with reference to his acquirements and diligence, than to his integrity and sterling principle, and those qualities which conciliate affection as well as esteem."

During the latter part of his residence

at Simon's Town, in addition to other studies, he read—"in Latin, the Æneid, Livy, and the Odes of Horace; Valpy's Second Exercises; the Eton Exempla Moralia;—in Greek, the New Testament; Valpy's Analecta Minora; the Extracts from Herodotus and Anacreon; and Valpy's Exercises;—in Mathematical Science, the entire subject of Arithmetic in Davidson's excellent Treatise; the first six books of Euclid;—Algebra, and Quadratic Equations (in Bonnycastle); Trigonometry, and the Mensuration of Heights and Distances, in Ramsay's edition of Hutton." He was likewise beginning the study of Italian.

His tutor, from one of whose letters the above extracts are taken, speaks of him as "studious and fond of reading;" and after referring with affectionate regret to the prospect of his removal, he adds, "Wherever he is placed, I doubt not that he will do no discredit to his instructors.

I hope they will find a good foundation to build upon, and that what he knows, he knows well."

His removal from the care of Mr. Judge, of whom he was wont to speak with much love and thankfulness, was rendered needful by his father's decision to send him to complete his education in England. It was not without much consideration that this step was determined upon, and it was with great and natural reluctance, that the time was at length fixed for the departure of so hopeful and affectionate a child.

In February, 1846, an opportunity of the most advantageous kind occurred for his returning to England, in H. M. S. "Winchester," under the care of a friend. In the final letter of arrangement, his father thus writes to John's grandfather, the Rev. J. Bickersteth, to whom, in conjunction with the Rev. R. Bickersteth, of

Clapham, John's uncle, the little boy was to be committed on his arrival in England :—

"With regard to the school at which he is to be placed, I have a leaning towards Rugby, particularly as you suggested it, but I wish entirely to be guided in this important consideration by your own better judgment. Mr. Judge speaks most highly of him in every respect, both as regards talents, industry, sound Christian principles, and firm adherence to those principles whenever it has been necessary for him to display it amongst his schoolfellows. You may perhaps find him a little deficient in manners; he has, however, been with me now some weeks at home, and he is improving in this respect, and will, I feel assured, continue to do so. This is really the only fault I have to find with him, and he is very tractable and obedient, and ready to

receive guidance and reproof in these matters with a teachable spirit."

Preceded by this high character, John set out for England, carrying with him, as one of his most valued possessions, the following beautiful and touching letter of parting counsel from his father :—

"My dearest Johnny,

* * * * * *

"And now, my dear boy, as you value my happiness or your own, remember, and endeavour, by God's help, earnestly sought for in prayer, to continue stedfast in the principles you have hitherto so happily maintained. Set your face firmly against every temptation that would lead from the path of rectitude and duty, and strain every nerve to gain honourable distinction in your studies. Remember, as I told you yesterday, that you have my happiness or the contrary in a great measure at your own disposal :

for tidings of your good conduct and success will make me a glad father, whilst any intelligence to the reverse will almost break my heart. Make your dear and excellent grandpapa, and your uncle Robert, your counsellors and advisers in every matter, and never act rashly or hastily on your own immatured resolves. Avoid evil companions, above all things, and seek the fellowship of those whose society may improve and edify you. Be strictly honourable and correct in all your dealings, particularly in money transactions; and endeavour as much as you can to be gentlemanly and polite in your manners—always thinking of the wants and wishes of others before your own. Above all, be constant in your religious services, without a due regard to which, no resolve you now make can stand any chance of being permanent or lasting. Once more, my dear Johnny,

farewell! Our meeting again in this world is very, very uncertain, but I shall hope to hear very constantly from you; and should it please God never to permit me to see your face again on earth, I hope we shall both strive to ensure a happier re-union above, where parting and sorrow are unknown.

"Your ever affectionate Father,

"H. BICKERSTETH.

"Cape Town, 27th Feb., 1846."

"P.S.—Keep this letter by you, and look at it often when alone, remembering it contains my last and most earnest advice to you."

On the 1st March, 1846, John sailed for England, in H. M. S. "Winchester;" Whilst on board ship, he seems to have beguiled the monotony of a long voyage in acquiring all the knowledge he could, by observation, reading, and study. He also amused himself with recording the

little passing events of each day in a journal, which makes frequent and grateful allusion to the kindnesses he received from those around him. A few extracts, transcribed verbatim from the book in which they were penned at the time, may show the nature of his employments :—

"March 4. This morning I went to school,* and felt anxious, as it was two or three months since I had looked at my Euclid, and the schoolmaster expected me to prove propositions which I had only read once, and that about a year before, and not allowing me to read them again; however, got over them very well."

"March 7. Sat writing a long time; then thinking it was about time for dinner, went to the berth and found that dinner was over; so, not liking to trouble the steward, went away and began to read."

* Joined the young midshipmen on board in their studies.

"March 12. Had the pleasure of seeing St. Helena. It seemed to me to be nothing but a succession of hills and valleys, of which the outside ones are one large mass of rock; most of them descending into the deep water at once without any shore or beach between; and where there is the slightest possibility of landing, forts are placed, and cannons on every high peak."

"March 13. Went on shore early, and took a long walk into the country, and I was quite astonished at its beauty; it is covered with verdure and groves of trees. I went up a hill called Ladder Hill, because a ladder with balustrades has been run up this hill on an inclined plane. To those who ascend for the first time, it is very fatiguing, as also is the coming down."

"March 31. There is a chance, though a very slight one, of my being at home

on my birthday, April 23rd. We are going on very steadily, and are pretty confident of reaching Corvo in a fortnight."

"April 6. Worked away till tea, and after, went on deck. Spent the evening in looking at the stars with Mr. ——, and so learned a good deal. Made an agreement to study astronomy with Mr. —— to-morrow."

"April 7. We shall be out of the tropics before twelve o'clock; expect soon to see the gulf-weed. We are now liable to lose the trade-wind at any time. It is rumoured that we may touch at Fayal, which I shall not like very much, being in a hurry to get to England. Read some astronomy with Mr. ——, and like it very much. We crossed the tropic at ten P.M., and are now in the temperate zone; saw plenty of the gulf-weed."

"April 13. Got up early and went on

deck; a nice breeze, and the ports on the main deck open; everything and everybody looking better. Only 940 miles from the Lizard to day. Hurrah for Old England!"

"April 16. Only 480 miles from the Lizard. Stayed up rather late with Mr. ——, and learned some more stars."

"April 17. Got up early: splendid breeze; ship flying, rather than sailing; only 180 miles from the Lizard. Stayed up till ten o'clock with Mr. ——, looking at the stars; found that I knew already twenty-one constellations. Determined to get up to see St. Agnes' light, and the Lizard lights, if we passed them during the night. At twelve some one awoke me, and told me we were passing St. Agnes' light. Went on deck—saw St. Agnes' light. Went on deck again at three o'clock, and saw the Lizard light very far away. Got up at four o'clock,

and went on deck; saw both the Lizard lights very plainly; we passed them rapidly."

On Sunday, April 19, the "Winchester" arrived at Spithead. On John's arrival in England, it was arranged that he should proceed to Clapham, to spend a few weeks with his uncle, the Rev. R. Bickersteth. His journey to town gave him his first experience of railway travelling. In a letter to his grandfather, written the day after his arrival at Clapham, he gives a minute and animated account of the speed at which he journeyed, of the tunnels, which seemed to him "darker than the darkest night," and of the various circumstances connected with a mode of travelling well calculated to interest a thoughtful child just arrived from a far-distant country.

CHAPTER II.

In a diary begun a few days after his arrival at Clapham, John makes a minute record of the various occupations and studies to which his attention was devoted; of the sermons which he heard, the texts being always carefully noted down; and of the many kindnesses which he received from friends at Clapham and elsewhere. It was one of his characteristics that kindness made an indelible impression upon him; it would perhaps surprise his esteemed Clapham friends to know how frequently and how gratefully he spoke of them up to the time of his last illness.

Amongst the books which he appears to have been reading during his stay at Clapham, were Dr. Arnold's Life, the Life of George Herbert, and Matthew Henry's Exposition of the Bible, which are repeatedly mentioned in his diary. Yet while delighting in studies such as these, he refers at the same time, with the pleasure natural to a boy of fourteen, to the visits he made on different occasions to the Colosseum, the Panorama of London, the Camera Obscura, the Polytechnic, Regent's Park, the Pantheon, the Adelaide Gallery, etc., etc.

On the 11th of May, after stating that he rose before sunrise, he adds, "Got up my Euclid, and learned all my definitions, axioms, and postulates, and six propositions; learned sixty lines of Virgil."

On the 12th he writes that he was occupied all the morning with Euclid,

and afterwards applied himself to Latin verse.

On the 14th, it appears that after an early breakfast, he "wrote out the translation of some odes of Horace, till three P.M." Tolerably close application, especially as it was almost entirely voluntary work.

"May 19th. Saw the solar microscope, heard a lecture on Phonography, and also a lecture on Artificial Memory."

"May 26. Amused myself with a present Mrs. —— had sent me, called an Apparatus to Stereometry."

"June 3. Went all through Hampton Court Palace, saw the vine, and the orangery, and went into the maze."

"June 4. Read, and made a list of all my possessions."

"June 15. Here I am once more at Sapcote, working hard for Rugby. May

He who rules over all, prosper my studies! Weakened by the hot weather."

The little entries with respect to health which are scattered throughout his diary, are sometimes rather touching, especially in the recollection how soon after they were written, the hand that penned them was to lie mouldering in the dust. They seem to tell of many an uncomplaining struggle, in which the weakness of the failing flesh was conquered by the energy of the untiring spirit. Before leaving the Cape he had had one or two sharp inflammatory attacks; yet at this period there were no striking outward signs of anything more than the slight delicacy of health which was natural to him; and he was habitually reluctant to complain, or to make much of what he would have called trifling ailments.

On the 19th of June, he writes: "Felt

quite ill from the heat; was obliged to lie down while writing my Latin verses."

"June 20. Met ——, who is a warning to those who desire to enter the ministry, not to enter unadvisedly or rashly, and without prayer."

"June 24. Set about my studies;" afterwards, "Read Cowper's Homer's Iliad, and an account of John Baptist."

"July 1. Wrote a plan of study."

" „ 2. Read some of Russell's Modern Europe, and began a theme upon 1 Sam. ii. 30. Read D'Aubigné on the Reformation."

The extracts made by this earnest little student, from Russell's Modern Europe alone, fill many closely written pages, and are selected with much care. Among the various books mentioned in his diary are —"Collyer's Interpretation of the Scriptures," "Christ our Example," "Doddridge's Rise and Pro-

gress," and "Bogatzky's Golden Treasury," which last seems to have been a special favourite.

"July 17. A man buried to-day—a warning to me.

"July 20. Read Tacitus.

" „ 26. Read Latimer. The lecture this evening was from Psa. cxix. 165—a beautiful lecture, superior almost to anything that I have heard. May God grant me never to leave England!"

The record of July 28, though in itself unimportant, contains one of those minute touches of character which will readily recal him to the recollection of all who knew him: "Aunt —— gave me a little desk, which she had very kindly bought for me in Leicester; which, though it cannot make me love her more than I do now, will be a remembrance of her to me—if indeed I *could* forget her."

"August 2. Read a book on the

Church Catechism, and "Thoughts on Conversion."

Under the date of August 7, are noted down the various useful occupations of a day entirely devoted to study, and to earnest endeavours to promote the comfort and enjoyment of all around him. Yet the comment which closes the simple and childlike account of the day's proceedings, shows how watchfully he examined those interior workings which eye cannot see. It runs thus:—

"Heart and affection too much alienated this day from God: may he give me a new heart!"

One of his employments at Sapcote, was writing outlines of the sermons that he heard, which, though necessarily brief —as the skeletons of three sermons were sometimes written on one Sunday—contain abundant evidence of the attention with which he listened. Indeed, one of

the striking features in his character was his behaviour in the house of God. His abstraction from all but the service of that house, his reverence for the place, his solemn delight in the worship, were not only decisive marks of the devotion of his own mind, but most exemplary and truly edifying to others.

Another interesting series of papers remains, which comprises the practical lessons that he was anxious to learn from the chapters which formed his own private daily reading; and it is profitable to notice how carefully and diligently he read the Scriptures for himself, for his own personal instruction and guidance; for example:—

"Mark x. I learn from this chapter—

"1st. That whatever I may give up for Christ, I shall never lose by him; and that I cannot give up so much as I shall gain by him.

"2nd. The evil of eagerly desiring and trusting in riches.

"3rd. That humility is the way to glory."

"Mark xi. I learn from this chapter—

"1st. Humility.

"2nd. The gladness with which I ought to welcome Christ to my own heart.

"3rd. Not to be unprofitable and unfruitful, like the barren fig-tree; but to be fruitful in good works.

"4th. That no man who hath not God's blessing can thrive.

"5th. That if I forgive not those who have trespassed against me, God will not forgive my trespasses."

The diary proceeds:—

"Aug. 11. Grandpapa a little displeased with me, came into my room, and cried bitterly. What a bad boy I must be, always displeasing somebody!

Read Matt. i. and ii., with 'Nicholls' Help,' till tea. After tea, eased my mind to dear grandpapa, and then felt very happy.*

"Aug. 18. Read 'Campbell's Chancellors of England.'"

On the 28th of August began John's short, but brilliant career at Rugby.

The day after his arrival the diary is thus continued:—

"Aug. 29. Got up early; read Bogatzky. Felt very lonely and dejected: O God, have mercy upon me, and give me courage, that I may fear none but thee! Enable me by thy grace to walk stedfastly in thy service: let thy Holy Spirit guide and direct my footsteps.

* The writer has been assured the displeasure was so very small, that even the occasion of it cannot now be called to remembrance. The extract only proves the delicate sensitiveness of the child's mind, and his Josiah-like tenderness of spirit.

Oh! give me a firm faith and reliance upon thee."

The part of his history now to be detailed, is one which those who loved him cannot but touch upon with some reluctance. Yet it would render this sketch most imperfect, to omit all mention of the trial, the very sharpness of which was made a touchstone to prove the sincerity of his Christian character; and which was doubtless overruled by Him whose prerogative it is to make all things work together for good to them that love him. Nor can we doubt but that it became a most important part of the discipline which was to fit him for an early entrance into that world where even *loving* correction has no place.

Without entering into minute and painful details respecting this trial, its nature may easily be understood on perusing the following passage, taken

from the published life of one who is perhaps the very highest authority that could be cited, the late revered Dr. Arnold himself:—

"It is a most touching thing to me," he said once, in the hearing of one of his former pupils, on the mention of some new-comers, "to receive a new fellow from his father, when I think what an influence there is in this place for evil, as well as for good. I do not know anything which affects me more." Again, in a letter to a friend, Dr. Arnold thus writes:—"Since I began this letter, I have had some of the troubles of school-keeping, and one of those specimens of the evil of boy-nature, which makes me always unwilling to undergo the responsibility of advising any man to send his son to a public school. There has been a system of persecution carried on by the bad against the good; and then, when a com-

plaint was made to me, there came fresh persecution on that very account; and divers instances of boys joining in it out of pure cowardice, both physical and moral, when, if left to themselves, they would have rather shunned it. And the exceedingly small number of boys who can be relied on for active and steady good, on these occasions, and the way in which the decent and respectable of ordinary life, (Carlyle's 'Shams,') are sure on these occasions to swim with the stream, and take part with the evil,—makes me strongly feel exemplified what the Scripture says about 'the strait gate' and the 'wide' one,—a view of human nature which, when looking on human life in its full dress of decencies and civilizations, we are apt, I imagine, to find it hard to realize. But here, in the nakedness of boy-nature, one is quite able to understand how there could not

be found so many as even ten righteous in a whole city. And how to meet this evil I really do not know; but to find it thus rife, after I have been [so many] years fighting against it, is so sickening, that it is very hard not to throw up the cards in despair, and upset the table. But then, the stars of nobleness which I see amidst the darkness, in the case of the few good, are so cheering, that one is inclined to stick to the ship again, and have another good try at getting her about."—*Life of Dr. Arnold*, Vol. I. pp. 176-7.

It is willingly conceded, that boys of equally sterling and uncompromising principle, may, and sometimes do, es cape much of the persecution here described and deplored. Had John been older, in more robust health, and more experienced in the ways of public schools, he could not have stood his

ground more nobly, but he might have maintained it with far less of personal suffering. Frail and delicate in constitution; singularly refined in mind, tastes, and feelings; and sensitive almost to a fault, the position in which he found himself may easily be imagined; but let not one needless line be penned respecting what his loving spirit forgave with the most frank and Christian readiness.

Of his masters at Rugby he ever spoke with high, and grateful, and affectionate esteem, well knowing how gladly they would have remedied the evils, had remedy been practicable; and it is only justice to say, that, much as he suffered from some among his companions (for all were not alike), no thought was entertained of removing him. Indeed, his friends were so fully persuaded that his difficulties would rapidly lessen with

each succeeding half-year, that in a letter written by the Rev. J. Bickersteth after John's death, the following sentence occurs: "I feel confident, that if God had mercifully spared him to us, he would have gone on happily, as well as prosperously, at Rugby." Had life and health continued, he would doubtless have been one of the ornaments of Rugby to this day.

CHAPTER III.

THE diary proceeds:—

"Aug. 30. Got up early, said my prayers, and then went out for a walk, taking Bogatzky's 'Golden Treasury' with me." After recording the events of the day, he adds, "Very much teased, but by God's grace bore it patiently."

Among other entries under the date of Aug. 31, is the following: "Several boys came in, asked me a great number of questions, and made me show my colours and principles, for which I was well teased. After prayers, went to bed, and shortly after, some boys came in and put a dog upon me, which I pushed off:

they repeated this several times, teasing and questioning me; but at last they went. O God! have mercy upon me; confound their machinations, and turn their hearts."

In a letter to his grandfather, dated Aug. 31, he thus writes:—"I wish very much to be examined and placed, for till then I shall have nothing to do, and shall have all the troubles of a new boy. If you can give me some comfort and advice, I shall be very happy. I have much more to tell you, when I can do it *vivâ voce*. I have by God's help kept to my principles, and still hope to do so, whatever I may suffer." In a second letter, written the same day, he says:—

"My dear Grandfather,

"It is with deep regret I write to tell you of ——'s death," (naming one

of the masters, whose valuable life terminated just at the commencement of another half-year's work of usefulness.)

"A little before his death, his father came into the room, upon which Mr. ——, in his delirium, called out, 'Christ is the Rock!' which, though uttered in delirium, showed that his mind must have been previously fixed on Christ.

"Within these few hours I have also been a little comforted, and though since I wrote to you my condition has not been at all changed, yet I have received comfort from ——" (naming one of the masters, to whom he afterwards became warmly and gratefully attached,, "who, though now himself much distressed, and having much upon his hands, yet, having accidentally met me, and having heard my troubles, said that he would look after me in two or three

days, and at the same time gave me some good advice.

"Were it not for Mrs. H——'s kindness, I should have been much worse off, but though badly off, I may truly say I have much to be thankful for. I hope better days are approaching; but if it should not be so, you may rest assured that He who has hitherto protected me, and kept my feet from falling, will enable me to sustain whatever he chooses to lay upon me."

The following extracts from some letters of counsel and encouragement which John received about this time, and prized not a little, may afford some cheering and valuable hints to those who are entering on the untried scenes of a public school:—

From the Rev. ——.

"I have thought much of you during

the last few days, fearing you may have much to encounter on your first introduction to a public school. But, with your good sense, good conduct, and industry, never fear but you will soon begin to make your way and find yourself at home and happy. Above all, dear Johnny, try and choose good companions, and never forget to pray God to keep you from all that is sinful, and all that is dishonourable. I look forward with much hope and confidence to your doing honour to the name you bear, and remember that the happiness of your whole life much depends upon your conduct for the next few years."

His grandfather writes :—

"My dearest Johnny,

"I have received your two letters this morning, and hasten to write to you a word of comfort and counsel. Be not

disheartened; 'brighter days will come.' You will not be long besieged, if you are found, as I trust you will, impregnable; and the Rock which seems to have been in poor ——'s last thoughts must, and I pray may be, in all yours. You see God had graciously provided for you a kind friend in Mrs. H——, to whom offer my kindest regards, with many thanks for her attention to you. You will soon get more settled, and as to acquaintances, be in no haste to form them; those best worth knowing will be cautious, as *I* wish *you* to be; and therefore, if —— [one of John's companions] is worth knowing, you will find *him* out, and he *you*, gradually. I am glad you have seen ——, [the master alluded to in John's letter, whose kindness had been consoling to him,] and though he will be of course in much affliction and trouble just now, (the old

wound of his father's death being unhealed,) yet I am sure of him that *he* will be your kind adviser. You cannot be comfortable until you get into habits of study, and know what you will have to do, and have got into your study; but in the meantime do not be disheartened. Just now your boat is among breakers, but the shore is in sight, and you are, it seems, pilot and steersman both.

"I can easily sympathise with you in the discomforts of your present state, contrasted with the late luxury of your own bedroom, study, the garden, and the absence of all kinds of teasing, and supply of all kinds of wants; but the grace of God will soon enable you to reconcile yourself to all and any trials that may befal you in the path of duty; and you can always feel, that though your own dear father is a long way off, yet your heavenly Father and Saviour

is ever at hand, and that with him you may converse often and always. Besides, you feel now that in England you have relatives who love, and think, and are anxious about you; and near enough to be with you in a very brief time, if the occasion should require it. . . . . There must have been a beginning, and in beginnings there is always something that is strange and awkward."

From a Friend.

"I foresaw that you would have many unpleasant things to encounter, but I rejoice beyond measure that you have had courage to avow your principles; keep to this, dear Johnny, and you will be sure to command the respect of others at last. I hope and trust that what is unpleasant in your position

may soon mend. Every boy, on first going to a public school, has to endure a good deal. You must take good heart. I expect soon to hear of your having made friends, and found pleasant companions; in so large a number of boys there must surely be some of a kindred mind to yourself, and the best friends are not often the ones we discover the earliest. I pray God to bless you and to keep you from all evil. Remember, there is nothing in my power I would not do for you, both for your dear papa's sake and for your own. If your path is a little rough just now, it will become smoother before long; and provided you work hard, and keep true to God and yourself, I have no fear of your doing well. Write when you have time to do so, but do not let your work be interfered with for this purpose. Let —— [one of John's school-

fellows] seek *you* out rather than you *him*."

Another correspondent writes :—"You need not fear while looking to God for wisdom, grace, and strength. When you hardly know whether you are doing right or not, remember the promise, James i. 5. When you feel your need of Divine grace, hear the word of Christ, 'My grace is sufficient for thee;' and when your strength fails, remember that consoling promise, 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness,' Isa. xli. 10. See also Isa. xl. 29—31."

The following practical hints are of peculiar value, especially as coming from one who had himself been educated at a public school :—"I think I warned

you, that public-school life is generally very unpleasant at first. I know I found it so, and so did a great many of my contemporaries. Not that this is very consoling, except as you will hope to find things mend, and will know that now you are passing through what is far the most trying part of your career. So I hope you will be of good courage; a few days or months of discomfort look long in prospect, but really they are soon passed; and then how short in the retrospect, and how many lessons of wisdom are learned in them which cannot be gained in any other way! School is like a little world, full of business, pleasures, interests, rival ships both in good and evil—but the evil vastly predominates. It is well to begin betimes to know how to choose the good and refuse the evil: it is well to be wise as serpents, and harm

less as doves; and it is well, for this end, to seek wisdom from above. To be fully employed, and meddle as little as possible in others' concerns,—I mean their quarrels and foolish tricks; to avoid standing in lounging places, and yet to shun meeting no one; to be ready to oblige, but as little as possible dependent upon others; to cultivate a cheerful spirit, and when at play to play heartily, as at study to read heartily; to remember the end of schooling, why your friends sent you, and what they are looking for, and that God put this into their minds, and ruleth over all; these are very important points, and if you know them, you will excuse my calling them to remembrance, because I rejoice to hear of your welfare."

Thus encouraged, John went on his way, looking upwards for strength and guidance. The petition, "O God, succour

me!" is the substance of not a few brief, but touching prayers with which his diary is interspersed.

On Sept. 2, he writes to his grandfather:—

"I am very thankful for your kind letter, and only wish I had more cheerful news to tell. I have got some advantages, and have also undergone many disadvantages. I am happy to say that, principally through Mr. M——'s kindness, I am now placed in the lower fifth form, which is the highest place I could have expected. Another thing is, that —— [one of his schoolfellows] is beginning to show himself and come out; for this morning, after my first lesson, he came up to me, congratulated me, and assured me that he would be a friend to me. I have as yet no permanent study, but am in a study with two other boys. I am exposed

to every provocation. I hope soon to be able to ask —— [one of the masters] about my study, but for the present I must endure, and all I ask is your earnest prayers that God would give me strength to bear what he has been pleased to lay upon me—and indeed he has hitherto wonderfully sustained me. I hope I shall have better news to write, for I should not like to distress you, or make you anxious on my account."

A few days later he writes to another relative:—"I think I may say that I see the dawn of better days, but I cannot be sure or even hope that my trials and sufferings are completely over. I have not yet made any friend, though I have seen many boys with whom I should like to form a friendship; but like all other good boys, they are very cautious and reserved, so that I

have no prospect of their friendship, until, alone and unaided, except by God, (whose help indeed is better than any other,) I shall have passed through all."

CHAPTER IV.

THE diary proceeds:—

"Sept. 3. Was put into ——'s study, which is more pleasant; also put into another bedroom, which has been generally used for the sick, and is the best bedroom in the house, with none else in it at present." After briefly alluding to the unkindness of some of his companions, he adds, "But God is my Friend, and as he has hitherto sustained me, I know he will not desert me."

"Sept. 4. Entreated help and deliverance of God; after went to Mr.

M——, to ask his advice and protection, which he gave me."

"Sept. 6. Read the 1st and 2nd chapters of I. Kings, preparatory to being examined in them this evening. Dr. Tait gave us a most beautiful sermon on Rev. xiv. 13, in which he alluded to —— [the master whose death was mentioned above], and at times was too much overcome with emotion to speak. Read 'Nicholls' Help' till prayers, and then went to bed. 'O God! I entreat thee deliver me; enable me to sustain all that thou shalt be pleased to lay upon me; but if it be not against thy will, oh! raise me up some friend who may join with me in serving thee, and under thee may be the means of protecting me, for Christ's sake.'"

"Sept. 11. Walked round the garden with Mr. M., and received some excellent advice from him."

On the same day John thus writes to his grandfather:—

"In your last letter you asked me to give you an account of the manner in which I spend the day; and as I now have a little leisure time, I will endeavour to comply with your request, though at the same time you will remember that I myself am not yet thoroughly acquainted with the various duties which a schoolboy here has to perform; but I will give you, to the best of my knowledge, an outline of the usual routine of business here. On Monday morning, the servant comes into the room, and rouses us with the cry of 'A quarter-past six!' and then we are expected to get up. At ten minutes to seven, the servant rings the house-bell, which tells us that it is time to go down to the Great School; and at the same time the bell of the Great School begins to summon us, and con-

tinues till the clock strikes seven, and then immediately the door is shut, and no one allowed to come in; then the master whose turn it is, reads prayers, whilst Dr. Tait acts as clerk, and says 'Amen' at the end of each. The boys are then called over, form by form, and as they are called over, they go out. Those who are absent, have a mark against their names, and will probably have some punishment. The boys then walk up and down in the cloisters, learning their lessons, until their several masters go into their respective rooms; for each form is heard in a separate room, by one particular master. The lesson usually lasts till eight A.M., when we are numbered, and then go home for breakfast. We then learn second lesson, which is usually some construing lesson—either Virgil, Cicero, or Homer. At a quarter-past ten we go down to

second lesson, and generally finish by half-past eleven; at a quarter to twelve we generally write, and at half-past one have dinner. From that time till four we have to learn the third lesson, which is also generally a construing lesson; and on Wednesday it is Michelet's 'History of France.' We generally finish our third lesson by five; and at half-past five we go in to the fourth lesson, which is generally a continuation of the third, and only lasts till six, from which time we are at liberty till half-past seven. On half-holidays there are several other extra occupations, about which I do not as yet know much, such as drawing, drilling, &c. In my form we are doing at present, Virgil, Cicero, Homer, Michelet's France, Latin verse, and Latin prose. I have found a boy whom I like very much, but he is neither in my house nor form, so that I cannot see much of him."

In a note written about this time, to the same correspondent, a query occurs, which, though relating to a mere trifle, shows the simplicity and the conscientiousness of John's character, and may be worth the perusal of any who are prone to forget that Christian principle has to do with little things as well as great things :—

"I seize this opportunity of writing to you, because, though I have not much to say, yet the little I have to say is of the greatest importance to me. The first subject is on the propriety of buying pictures for my study. The two other boys in my study have each bought a picture, and I am generally regarded as mean and stingy for not following their example; but these pictures are usually very expensive, and I cannot think of spending twelve shillings on a picture; but still I wish to do something, that I

may show that I am willing to contribute my share towards making the study comfortable; will you therefore advise me?"

The reply to this inquiry may not be uninteresting to any who may at some time have chanced to find themselves in a similar dilemma.

"My dear Johnny,

"Upon your '*important*' query about the study and its pictures, I, too, grieve that your little stock of pocket-money should be infringed upon for an object certainly in itself unnecessary, and therefore really useless; and yet I should be sorry that you suffered, even in name, by refusing your quota of adornment to your study. I am sure if you think it right to purchase a picture, you will procure one which by a master could not be objected to; but might not something in the form of a map, to hang up, unite the '*utile*' with the '*dulce*,' and at once

save your character, and prevent an absolutely useless expenditure of your money? Think of this, but on consideration act for the best, and I trust you will act rightly. It is your privilege, in everything, to consult and make a friend of your heavenly Father."

The same endeared relative thus writes on another occasion:—"I cannot refrain from giving you one line of congratulation on your improved prospects at Rugby. Now that you have been tried, you will become known; and I have every hope, from your diligence and intelligence, that you will soon win the good-will of your teachers, and command the respect even of those who have taken pleasure in teasing you. I quite approve of your caution in the formation of your friendships; and while others who are worth knowing are observing the like caution, the effect must be loneliness for a time;

but in pursuing the even path of duty, you will always find comfort and strength. Above all, I trust you will evermore be sensible that your strength for all goodness and all real excellence, is of God alone, who can give you favour in the sight of your companions or masters; and in *whose* favour is life, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. I pray that through Jesus Christ you may ever enjoy the happiness of communion with him in faith and prayer, in hope and love."

On Sept. 14, his uncle at Clapham wrote:—"I hope you will hold firm as a rock to your good principles; depend upon it, this will ensure you respect from others, and a self-satisfaction from within, which nothing can compensate for the want of. All your Clapham friends inquire eagerly after you. God has given you many friends, dear Johnny. Try hard and do credit to them all."

The diary proceeds:—

"Sunday, September 18. Dr. Tait preached a sermon, in which he alluded to a school-boy who had just died at home, and gave him a high Christian character."

"Sept. 18. O God, sustain me!"

"Sept. 21. Saw Mr. M——, who advised me to try for the prize in mathematics, but there seems scarcely time."

This journal, a genuine abstract of its author's mind, here abruptly closes; for as the half-year advanced towards its conclusion, John devoted himself so closely to study that even his home letters became few and far between. As the results of his unwearied efforts will be given subsequently, and as it is undesirable to prolong this narrative, the present chapter, and the account of his sojourn at Rugby, will conclude with one

or two further extracts from the letters which cheered and animated him in his ardent and successful endeavours.

On the 8th Oct., the Rev. J. Bickersteth writes :—

"My dearest Johnny,

"I am sorry that you have had to write twice before my answer to the first letter. The truth is, I am very much pleased with the statement which you were able to give in your first letter, and as I thought so would —— be, I sent it to him, and have not got it back. My belief is that you are acting upon a principle of conscience, duty, and faith, and then you may fearlessly encounter all adversaries. 'He that walks uprightly walks surely.' * * * Nature is a corrupted soil, and only as grace renews the heart, and enables its owner to mortify the elements of evil as they are inherent, can we hope

to bring forth the fruits of righteous ness in all respects. I say 'in all respects,' because, thanks to God for his restraining grace, and thanks to early education, and freedom from contaminating associations, there is in the world a principle of honour which abhors a mean action, and of truth which will not condescend to degrade itself by the practice of deceit, envy, falsehood, guile, or knavery of any specious kind; but as far as respects consulting for the glory of God, and the interests of our souls, and the grand stake of eternity to be lost or won, neither the principle of honour nor any other worldly principle can be relied upon at all. May you ever feel that by faith you stand upright, and by grace alone can be preserved from falling into sin, and running into danger. Remember it is a great honour to be a God-fearing boy, and that the holy fear of God com-

mands the respect even of those from whom at first it provoked contempt. The steady course which I trust by God's grace you are pursuing, and intend to follow, cannot but tell well in the end. Under God, a good character is everything; and this, time confirms, and time only can bring to light. Wickedness is apparent and hateful, notwithstanding all its cunning and disguise; and the prevalence of wickedness makes even goodness itself an object at first of some doubt and suspicion, until experience shall have proved its genuineness."

The same correspondent again writes: —"Oct. 12, 1846. I received with much pleasure your account of your success in your form, and also of Dr. Tait's interesting counsel in his sermon. With regard to your studies, your way is quite plain. Be firm and manful in adhering

to your duty. Be industrious, and not anxious. Satisfy your conscience that you are doing your best, and then leave the event with God."

The following letter, which is likewise from the Rev. J. B., is dated Nov. 9, 1846:—

"I am glad to hear you are so industriously occupied, and almost conclude that you have not only the "*mens conscia recti*" encouragement, but that of your masters. As to your voluntary lessons, I think you are right in taking what will be the easiest to yourself; for instance, a piece of English poetry for recitation. While you are busily and usefully employed, the temptations of idlers will not only cease to be temptations, but the tempters will fly to others whose habits and dispositions are congenial, or supposed to be so, with their own. I pray that you may be kept by the power of

God through faith, may be busy and not anxious, diligent and not ambitious; in brief, wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove."

CHAPTER V.

At the commencement of the Christmas vacation, John returned to Sapcote, happy in the approval of his masters, who were well pleased with his whole deportment during the half-year, and with the manner in which he had acquitted himself in the examinations at its close. In less than four months he had worked his way to the very top of his form, which numbered one hundred and twelve boys; and when the examinations were over, he was the head boy in three branches of the examination, and second in the fourth. He was first in Classics, first in Mathematics, first in Divinity,

and second in Modern Languages. He returned in high spirits, chiefly delighted because of the joy which he knew his success would give his father. Over and over again he said, "I am so happy, I do not know what to do!" Yet amidst this joyous excitement, He who had kept the youthful disciple from sinking in the day of adversity, now mercifully kept him from being unduly lifted up in this season of unhoped-for prosperity. Indeed, if there were one point more than another in which his improvement was conspicuous, it was in his increased humility.

The following letter from one of his kind instructors, contains a most satisfactory report of his half-year's progress:

"Dec. 29, 1846.

"I am sure that you will be glad to hear what I have to say about your grandson. He has been going on the whole half-year as well as a boy could do, and

passed a most brilliant examination at its end. It was really a pleasure to be one of his examiners. I believe that in almost every subject we had to give him nearly full marks—every part of his work proving that he has very superior abilities, and that he had taken great pains to prepare himself for the examination. Mr. ——'s remark on adding up the marks, was, 'Bickersteth is sure to distinguish himself.' As far as I have any means of judging, he comes to you as innocent as when you sent him to us. I know that he was rather unhappy, especially at the beginning of the half-year; but he will find things very different next time he returns; he will no longer be a new boy, and will not be told that a new boy has no right to work or get to the top of his form."

Immediately on his return to Sapcote, he set himself to accomplish the tasks

assigned to him for the vacation, and in the course of the first three weeks it is believed that he completed the whole. In addition to this, he devoted a short time each day to learning German, which was one of the studies of the form in which he expected to be placed on his return to school. He observed that he was anxious to learn as much German as he could during the holidays, that he might keep up with his companions without occasioning his father the additional expense which would be incurred by his having private lessons from a German master. He continually spoke of his father with the deepest affection, and frequently alluded to the letter of parting counsel which he brought with him from the Cape. Referring to one expression in it, "strain every nerve," he repeated it half aloud several times over, whilst conversing on one occasion

with a friend, and added, "When I was at school, and busy with my lessons, if I were working hard, but still not my very hardest, I used to think, 'This is not straining *every* nerve,' and then I tried harder"—a touching proof of his high conscientiousness, though it cannot but be lamented that the ardent energy of his character should have led him to interpret his father's injunction only too literally. He spoke warmly of those who had shown him kindness at school, but was reserved and nearly silent with respect to any who had acted otherwise, except when questioned on the subject. All who saw him were struck with his forgetfulness of self, his thoughtfulness for others, his uniform desire to oblige, and his gentle courtesy of manner, which was quite unusual at his age. To his grandfather he was a source of continual comfort and delight, and not even a

stranger's eye could observe without interest the thoughtful and intellectual expression of his open countenance, which beamed with a sweetness and serenity that seemed to tell of a spirit that dwelt in peace.

One little incident that occurred about this time may show his ready obedience, even in circumstances in which no blame would have followed an apparent failure in this respect. Having been invited one day to dine with a friend residing three miles from Sapcote, his grandfather expressed a wish that he would return home before dark. Dinner was accidentally delayed till evening was fast coming on; but John, anxious to return punctually at the appointed hour, was deaf to all solicitations, and leaving the table long before the meal was concluded, he hurried home in such breathless haste, that he arrived panting, and quite

exhausted. Such was this Christian child in his last days of health and animation. The Divine Teacher had long been educating him for heaven, and now his training was almost complete. The last sermon that he ever heard, concluded with a sentence which was afterwards deemed singularly appropriate,—"Then shall we know by our own happy experience, that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, have wrought out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

And now the time was fast approaching when this youthful disciple was to hear a voice saying, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." His sun was to go down long ere it was yet noon. In the midst of his early successes and brilliant prospects, the summons went forth—"Come up hither!"

About the middle of January. 1847, he

caught a severe cold, which was speedily followed by fever and delirium; and on Saturday, January 23rd, his illness was pronounced to be brain fever. He spoke much and incoherently, saying he only wanted to get up and be at his studies. Blisters, leeches, etc., were applied, and his head kept constantly wet with cold water, or covered with ice; but all was ineffectual. Yet, though he was delirious during the greater part of his brief illness, there were some bright intervals of consciousness, during which he was continually in prayer. To those who were anxiously ministering to his comfort, he several times said, "Dear ——, how very kind you are! I don't deserve all this."

His uncle from Clapham, who hastened to him when his illness became serious, thus writes to John's father:—

"During the whole of dear John's delirium, he uttered nothing that was incon-

sistent with the fact of his being a devotedly pious boy. In his intervals of consciousness he uttered much, the recollection of which will be precious to you, as it is to ourselves. Upon one occasion, looking very hard at me for a few moments, he exclaimed—'It is, it is my dear papa! Oh! dear papa, how glad I am to see you!' I did not try to undeceive him, and for some time he appeared to be in exquisite enjoyment, from the belief that you were at his side. On Sunday he beckoned me near to him, and asked me to pray with him. Upon my asking him if he were unhappy about anything, he said, 'Why, when I think of my sins, they are very terrible; but I want to fix my eyes on the mercy of God.'

"At another time he asked me to tell him something to think of, and I repeated the text—'Jesus Christ, the same

yesterday, and to-day, and for ever:' he said he could think of that."

On Wednesday, Jan. 27, a few hours before his departure, he said aloud, "This is my death-day," and again repeated "death-day." Shortly afterwards he became unconscious, and soon after midnight he sank without a struggle into the arms of death. A few days later he was buried in Sapcote-churchyard, by the side of one of whom mention was made in the beginning of this narrative, his aunt Annie, his former kind instructress. They had been long and widely parted; but their remains now rest together, in "sure and certain hope."

The Rev. R. Bickersteth writes respecting him, in a letter from which extracts have already been given:—

"There is nothing to regret on dear Johnny's part. He has run his course nobly; he has had a brief, but bright

career, and has for ever escaped the toils and temptations which would have encountered him, had he lived longer upon earth."

On the Rev. J. Bickersteth now devolved the painful task of transmitting to the Cape the intelligence of a bereavement which deprived an affectionate father of an only son. A few years before, a letter bearing somewhat similar tidings had crossed the ocean; now the correspondents were the same, but they had exchanged positions; the receiver of the former mournful intelligence was this time the sender. Such is life!

A few extracts from the Rev. J. Bickersteth's letter, will afford one or two more particulars:—

"Sapcote Rectory, 28th Jan., 1847

"Most gladly, my very dear ——, would I have spared you the wound from which

at this moment I am sharply suffering myself; but this is impossible. Yet what shall I say? or how shall I express the feelings with which I am constrained to tell you that your boy, whom we loved only less than his own father loved him, has this day been taken from us? Yes, here is the wound: but here too is the healing balm—taken from us into heaven; 'the land' (as he himself called it, shortly before his removal,) 'of bright, eternal light.' Yes, the Lord whom in his days of youth he sought and remembered, honoured and served, has received him out of our sight." After describing the nature of his illness, the writer proceeds:—"You have lost a dear son and a pleasant child, and I have lost one who in your absence and stead ministered to me the greatest comfort. By the faculty, the disease was ascribed remotely to intense application to his studies, and

directly to the severe cold already named. He was indeed a most diligent and self-denying student, being stimulated by religious principle and the desire to give you pleasure. As a student, he gained all that could be gained; with regard to conduct, the master with whom he lived described it thus — 'Thoroughly good from the beginning to the end of the half-year.'

"I am quite aware how natural it is, in circumstances like those in which I write, to over-estimate or over-state facts; but in sober truth I am bound to say, he was a son whom his father had cause to rejoice over: one who knew what was due to his Heavenly, and therefore mistook not what he owed to his earthly, father. His first care was to please the Lord, and his next to requite you for sacrifices which he felt you had made, and would make, for his advantage. His

humility and modesty could only be equalled by his docility and his dutifulness. His devotion was most exemplary, without the least show of affectation; his behaviour in the house of God, and in the family worship at home, discovered a mind deeply impressed, and doubtless, by the grace of God, religiously governed. He was a constant and prayerful hearer and reader of the Scriptures, in studying which he voluntarily spent by himself intervals of every day, and specially of the sabbath; and notes remain of sermons heard at church, and of expositions at the family prayer.

"When you shall have received this letter, *our* bitter sorrow will be mitigated, not only by the lapse of time, but by a deeper and firmer conviction of the gracious design of a visitation seemingly not gracious. Over the dark thick cloud is seen the bow of the covenant of peace

and promise; the storm is winged with mercy, and the rod has its voice of paternal love. For this dear child all is gained. What can be gained more than the glory, the honour, and the peace of heaven?"

Thus terminated, in the fifteenth year of his age, the earthly history of this interesting child.

The stone which marks his grave, bears the following inscription:—

JOHN LANG BICKERSTETH.
BORN APRIL 23, 1832.
DIED JANUARY 28, 1847.
He remembered God in his youth:
He was tried, and found faithful.

"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."—PROV. viii. 17.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."—ECCLES. xii. 1.

"The Lord God shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom."—ISA. xl. 10, 11.

The principles which actuated him whose brief course we have described, are, it is hoped, so far developed in the preceding pages, that a very short summary may close this record of one who "being dead yet speaketh."

He was one who, in no ordinary degree, feared and loved God. In every difficulty and perplexity, the Divine word was a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path. His first desire was to please God, and conscientiously to fulfil every duty of that state of life unto which God had called him. Among his most striking characteristics were, 1st—His prompt and cheerful obedience to those placed in authority over him. 2nd—His earnest and energetic industry and perseverance. 3rd—His grateful recollection of any words or acts of kindness, and his singular reluctance to dwell upon any treatment of an opposite kind. 4th—His

uncompromising firmness in resisting every incitement to do what his conscience told him to be wrong. From these and similar marks of the repentance, faith, and holy dispositions which distinguish the child of God, we infer surely that the Lord God had called this child by his grace on earth, leading him to a true faith in Christ, and that he has now called him to the participation of the promised glory in heaven. May the like grace, the earnest of the same glory, be vouchsafed to the young reader of this little record, to follow him as he followed Christ; that, hereafter, he may also with him be a partaker of the same happiness!

APPENDIX.

The writers of the letters, a few extracts from which will now be given, will, it is hoped, pardon their insertion, not only because the words of Christian consolation with which John's bereaved relatives were comforted in their hour of sorrow may cheer other mourners likewise, but because each additional testimony is of value, as illustrating the reality and efficacy of the Divine work in this youthful believer. True, he needs not these testimonies, and to him it is indeed a very small matter now to be judged of man's judgment.

It is, however, the object of these pages, not to do honour to John, but to magnify the grace of God which made him what he was.

I.

"I have anxiously taxed my memory in vain, to recollect anything in the conduct of dear John that was inconsistent with his character as a truly pious boy. The dear little fellow has had a brief but brilliant career." Referring to the various ways in which his character had been tested at school, the same correspondent adds—"He came out of it all nobly, and proved by his brilliant success that piety is not incompatible with the closest attention to all ordinary duties."

II.

"Yesterday fortnight we saw dear John in perfect health; ten days after, he had for ever bid farewell to all the troubles of this mortal life. I do trust his death will be a useful lesson to the boys at Rugby. Johnny certainly did confess his Saviour nobly before them, and the recollection of this may speak to some who made his path there so peculiarly trying and difficult."

III.

"Earnestly and often, from the time we first heard of his illness, did we pray that the cup, if possible, might pass from you; but the designs of his heavenly Father were far more full of love to him than our weak wishes. I had fondly looked forward to his coming among my children, as the greatest privilege I could have afforded them."

IV.

"We do indeed sympathize very closely with you in your sorrow at the loss of that noble boy, whom God had so evidently prepared and ripened for heavenly places. His memory will live with us all, as one eminently "faithful and beloved."

V.

One * who has since followed John to the better land, wrote as follows to her bereaved brother at Sapcote:—

"Alas! my dear, my much-loved brother, this is a sad trial to you; the sweet boy who was destined, as we fondly hoped, to be such a comfort to you, so soon, so suddenly removed;—the stroke would indeed be bitter, did

* The much-lamented wife of the Rev. J. Cooper, Rector of Coppenhall, Cheshire.

we not see a loving Father's hand guiding and directing all. Whilst I sympathize with you from the ground of my heart, I cannot but congratulate you also, my dearest brother, in having been permitted (though but for a short season) to minister both temporarily and spiritually to the happiness of one of the Saviour's most precious lambs. Dear child! he was early refined for higher service than any that could be found for him here. We will not grudge him this honour, but will rather look upon it as an especial call to seek earnestly to become more and more like *such* children, in teachableness, simplicity, humility, and love."

In a subsequent letter, after urging that some little memorial of this Christian child should in due season be published, the same writer thus proceeds: "I cannot for a moment doubt that

it would be made a great blessing to many, and indeed such examples were never more needed than in the present day, when the profession of religion abounds in the world, and, what is much worse, worldliness abounds in the church."

VI.

The master in whose house John lived, writes—"I felt how severe is the loss of a member so childlike, so pure, so conscientious, so determined to be Christ's disciple, as he was. His success in his work here was as brilliant as it could be, and most truly do I rejoice that he had the happiness of feeling, while here among us, how entirely he had gained the esteem of both masters and schoolfellows, amongst whom, as I understand, he had at first much trouble to undergo. He is now before a higher

Master, whose will it was his constant and earnest wish implicitly to follow."

VII.

From another of the Masters at Rugby.

"In following Christ, he had indeed to bear His cross; but nobly did he bear the trial, and he has now to enter on his reward. I am very glad that I saw him when I did at Sapcote (ten days before his death); he mentioned to me the names of several boys who had been kind to him, and I shall take some opportunity of telling them that their kindness made such an impression on him. I do not remember that I heard him give the name of any boy who had treated him ill."

Some months after John's death, the head-master of Rugby very kindly forwarded to Sapcote Rectory a copy of

D'Aubigné's "History of the Reformation," bearing this inscription :—

"Rugby School Christmas Examination, 1846."

On the blank leaf was written :—

"This prize was awarded by the Masters of Rugby School to John Bickersteth, on his attaining the highest honour of his form. Before the prizes were distributed, it pleased God to remove him to his Saviour's presence, to the great loss of the school, and his own everlasting gain.

"Rugby, 19th April, 1847."

The volume was accompanied by the following gratifying letter from Dr. Tait :—

"Rugby, 19th April, 1847.

"My dear Sir,

"The time has come when we give

the prizes to those of our boys who distinguished themselves last Christmas. The first name that stands on the list in the lower fifth is that of your grandson; and though it is out of our power now to give any pleasure to himself (seeing that he has long been out of the reach of earthly pleasures or pains), it is a satisfaction to myself to send you his prize, that I may thereby mark the high sense of his Christian character entertained by his masters, and by all the better sort of his schoolfellows who had any acquaintance with him. To me he was, from his position in the school, but little known; but all I did see of him, and all I have heard of him since, convinces me that the school suffered great loss by his death. We might well have looked for a very bright example, had his time here been prolonged, and many boys might have been

benefited to all eternity by his life. I have reason to hope, that, through God's great goodness in Christ, his death also has been blessed to some. Though he was so short time among us, I am sure he will be long remembered.

"Believe me to be, my dear Sir,

"Your faithful servant,

"A. C. TAIT.

"The Rev. J. Bickersteth."

This series of extracts, which might be almost indefinitely extended, cannot perhaps close more appropriately than with the following letter, written by John's bereaved father, whilst yet all unconscious of his bereavement, to the son whom he supposed to be earnestly engaged in school occupations and *duties,* but who, long ere the letter

was penned, had been peacefully laid in that quiet resting-place, the grave:

"Cape Town, Cape of Good Hope,
"13th March, 1847.

"MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

"I received your long letter two or three days since, and take the first opportunity of acknowledging it, and telling you how very happy the intelligence it contained has made me. I rejoice indeed, my dear boy, that you have been enabled, through God's assistance, to make so firm a stand for right principles, on first starting in your career at Rugby; and it is my earnest, anxious prayer, that such principles may every succeeding year become more deeply rooted in you. Your success has indeed been great, and it only shows what may be done by an honest perseverance in

industrious habits and steady conduct; and be assured that such results will continue to follow your endeavours, if you only continue to be actuated by the same motives, and place your dependence and reliance upon God. . . . . Farewell, my dear Johnny! you do not know how glad you have made my heart. *Persevere, only persevere* in the course you have so manfully begun, and honour and distinction will attend you in this world, and, what is far better, eternal happiness in the next.

"Ever yours, my dearest Johnny,

"Most affectionately,

"H. BICKERSTETH."

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